AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group) audio decoding method for decoding an audio stream, comprising:

a compression process of compressing a plurality of allocation tables used when searching for the number of quantization steps and storing a compressed table in a memory; and

a decoding process of decoding the number of quantization steps by using the compressed table stored in the memory, wherein:

the compression process includes:

a first step of converting each said allocation table by reducing each group of subbands sharing a pattern to one, said pattern representing a relationship between an index value and the number of quantization steps;

a second step of converting the converted allocation tables into a single first table by reducing each group of subbands sharing said pattern to one; and

a third step of defining, in a second table, offset values each corresponding to one subband, which are used for referencing the first table;

the compression process stores the first and second tables, as the compressed table, in the memory; and

the decoding process includes:

a first step of obtaining an offset value by referencing the second table using a subband as a key; and

a second step of referencing the first table using the offset value obtained in the first step to obtain the number of quantization steps from said pattern read out.

2. (Currently amended) The MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group) audio decoding method of claim 1, wherein in the second step of the compression process, the first table is further converted by using a bit allocation where each bit uniquely represents the number of quantization steps.